

# Sermon: Pentecost 4

The Rev. Mike Wernick

July 2, 2017

Year A

Jeremiah 28:5-9

Psalms 89:1-4, 15-18

Romans 6:12-23

Matthew 10:40-42

The image on our cover looks like a gin and tonic... without the lime... but it's not... it's a glass of water... and it's an image that calls to mind what Jesus says... about giving a cup of cold water to one who is thirsty... Jesus has already offered Living Water to the Samaritan woman... and through her to others... but today's Gospel is part of a larger section in Matthew at the beginning of chapter 10... in which Jesus sends the disciples out... he instructs them about where to go... what to do... what to take... and you'll remember... he talks about shaking dust off feet where there is no welcome...

Jesus talks a lot about welcome... today's Gospel is short... but it's packed with welcome... *whoever welcomes you welcomes me... whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me... whoever welcomes a prophet will receive a prophet's reward... whoever welcomes a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward... and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones...* someone who is young... perhaps spiritually immature... someone who may still be learning... then none of those who give cold water... will lose their reward... their *wages*... as it says in the Greek...

Jesus compares giving water... with extending welcome... in one way... giving water is the same thing as giving life... and that can sometimes be hard to do... if you've ever gone hiking in a hot and arid climate... you know what a burden it can be to carry in enough water to sustain just yourself... water weighs 8.3 lbs. per gallon... and sometimes you may not want to give that away too easily... when water seems like a commodity... when it seems like a sacrifice... you may want to be the one who decides who gets it... who seems deserving enough...

But on another level... in this 8.3 lb. per gallon water... in the same water that gives life... we have also been buried with Jesus in the waters of baptism... we have drowned and died and been reborn... and we are exhorted over and over again... to give cup after cup of liquid H<sub>2</sub>O to strangers... and to give cup after cup of welcome and hospitality without price... when we carry this burden alone... it's hard work... but we're meant to do it community... not do it alone...

My father passed on... on Father's Day... even before I went down on June 16 to see him... to say what turned out to be my good-byes... when his condition began to decline... I thought that might happen... I don't know if it was intuition or common sense... but I thought it would become hard to forget when he passed... and easy to honor *him who fathered me*... on this holiday...

And the holiday we celebrate in two days... the national holiday we celebrate with fireworks and cook-outs... the holiday which birthed this nation... Independence Day... is for all Americans... of all faiths and all races... but it wasn't always so...

The Book of Common Prayer... has a Prayer of the Day for Independence Day... and a Prayer of the Day... For the Nation... today's bulletin uses the latter... but listen closely to the one written for this Tuesday...

Lord God Almighty, in whose Name the founders of this country won liberty for themselves **and for us**... and lit the torch of freedom for nations then unborn: Grant that we and all the people of this land may have grace to maintain our liberties in righteousness and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord...

African-American Byron Rushing... who serves on the Episcopal Church's Executive Council on Anti-Racism... reminds us that the words... *won liberty for themselves and for us*... did not include people of color... that phrase is only possible because slavery

was ignored... was forgotten... was written out of the equation... the "us"... he wrote... was not meant to include "me"...

The Gospel can be hard to hear... our minds think of reasons why it doesn't apply to us... or to our situation... like who deserves our water... but in our hearts... we know the kind of hospitality... the kind of welcome... about which Jesus speaks... is what we are all called to embody... but we're not there yet... executive orders about immigration and pending legislation about health care... make it impossible for millions of little ones to feel or be welcomed and cared for...

And I wish I had thought to say some of the things that our two bishops and others have said about the Gospel... and about welcome... like it's time people grew up... it's time they were responsible for what they said and did... like how ignorant people aren't stupid... they're just ignoring certain information so they don't have to change... I wish I had thought to say that the sin of Sodom wasn't homosexuality... but a lack of hospitality... of not being just... of bullying... of hating strangers... and not caring for the marginalized... I wish I had thought to say that a church that doesn't practice political advocacy for those being marginalized... is simply a tool of the *status quo*...

I wish I had thought to say something about Christians who on Sunday profess their love for the one who said... *when you do it to the least of these you do it to me*... but who spend the rest of the week supporting political platforms that marginalize...

I wish I had thought to say that drawing a line in the sand between one's voice as a Christian and one's voice as a citizen with its first amendment right... allows us to pray for immigrants on Sunday and advocate for a wall the rest of the week...

I wish I had thought to say that if your religion doesn't challenge you to care for people you might otherwise be dismissive of... but instead... reinforces your negative feelings

about them... then you don't have a religion... you have a formalized structure for institutionalizing your biases...

I wish I had thought to say that equal rights for others... doesn't mean fewer rights for me... this is not pie we are cutting...

Minister Liddy Barlow wrote... our petty squabbles and grievances have distracted us from our mission... squandered our resources... broken hearts... and ruined lives... it's a tragedy that we cannot come to One communion table... a shame that our belief in "one holy catholic and apostolic church" remains just an abstract ideal... our divisions have made us strangers... but even within this brokenness... there is blessing... because we are strangers... we can welcome each other... because we are not yet at home with one another... we can extend hospitality... and in that welcome... as we bear his image to one another... Christ is present in our midst...

We can bring God with us as we cross the threshold of any house of worship... and we can find God reflected back to us in the welcome we receive there... we can dare to experience the unknown... trusting that invisibly... but truly... Jesus comes alongside us...

And Bp. Satterlee wrote: It is not enough to do justice... we also have to love kindness... and we have to love kindness so much that we are kind to those with whom disagree... those whose words and deeds we hate... those who would silence us and silence Christ... Jesus says... *Love your enemies... do good to those who hate you... bless those who curse you... pray for those who abuse you...* and Jesus did... then Jesus said... *Father, forgive them... for they do not know what they are doing...* love kindness that much...

Today's Prayer of the Day includes African-Americans... though we know that many people across this country would not... my Jewish father is included in the saints in

light... though many Christians would say *not so*... LGBT people... for now at least... have marriage equality... though many would reverse that if they could... those who would erect walls and barriers and take rights away... do not know what they are doing...

Because... you see... the boundless God whom we worship... draws us into increasing boundlessness... independence... and inter-dependence... God's diversity was never intended to be divisive... and the divisions between us are lies...

So as we celebrate Independence Day... let's recommit ourselves to do all we can... to live out that independence... and that hospitality... and that welcome... for all people... And perhaps you can join us on August 19 for the Standing Together event we're hosting... to extend welcome to our Christian and Muslim neighbors... there's some more information about it... on your announcement sheets... Holy God... make it so...

Mike+